

Harris County Fair Housing Narrative Statement

Introduction

The purpose of this statement is to establish a system to track performance activities related to strategies to address impediments to Fair Housing and barriers to Affordable Housing Development discussed in the Harris County Community Services Department's Fair Housing Plan, which is a part of the PY2013-2017 Consolidated Plan. The Consolidated Plan lists six impediments to Fair Housing: 1) need to combat overt discrimination and lack of Fair Housing Knowledge; 2) Lack of affordable housing development; 3) The need to reduce areas of concentration; 4) The need to improve lack of quality community amenities; 5) Presence of community opposition towards affordable housing (NIMBYism); and 6) Barriers created by credit and financial institutions. The following discusses accomplishments toward activities by the Harris County Community Services Department (HCCSD) to implement their strategies to address impediments to Fair Housing and barriers to Affordable Housing Development during a single program year. Included with this statement is a matrix reporting activities performed to address Fair Housing and housing barriers.

Persons with a Disability

According to the 2008-2012 ACS five year survey, there are 368,014 persons residing in Harris County with at least one disability or 9.0 percent of the population. Many persons with disabilities need services to increase or maintain their quality of life. Services needed include counseling, housing placement, food and clothing distribution, transportation services, enrichment classes, exercise and recreation programs, job training and placement and independent living skills training.

Large Family Households

Large, related households of five or more persons face a number of housing challenges, most notably, finding an affordable residence large enough to accommodate all family members. In Harris County, 34.5 percent of the population is considered to have a large family household. According to the 2009 CHAS data, this household type accounts for 18.4 percent of all low- and moderate-income households in the CSD service area. Large related households earning less than 30 percent of the Median Family Income (MFI) face major housing affordability deficits, and based on estimated housing cost deficits, low- to moderate-income, large households are identified as having a high housing cost burden.

Female Head of Household

Female head households accounted for 15.3 percent of households in Harris County. In addition, 35.0 percent or 1 out of every 3 female-headed households with children in Harris County were living below the poverty line. Living below the poverty line may be attributed to lower earnings for female head of household families, declining value and availability of public assistance, and the lack of affordable housing.

Mortgages in the Houston-Sugarland-Baytown MSA

HCCSD staff monitors the disposition of conventional home purchase loans through the Home Mortgages Disclosure Act (HMDA). In 2012, the HMDA reported 49,792 applications received in the Houston-Sugarland-Baytown MSA. Of these, 35,214 or 71% loan applications were

originated. Of loans originated, 68% were for White non-Hispanics and 32% were for minority households.

Section One: Citizen Participation and LEP

Harris County has always considered citizen participation to be vital to the development of successful planning and community revitalization efforts for low- and moderate-income (LMI) communities. HCCSD has developed an extensive Citizen Participation Plan which can be found in the PY2013-2017 Consolidated Plan and the PY2015 Annual Action Plan, and highlights of the plan can be found in the PY2013 CAPER.

Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

During the Citizen Participation process, notice of community meetings and comment period were made to the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) population in Spanish and Vietnamese. Notices were published in the Houston Chronicle and Spanish newspaper La Voz and posted to the HCCSD website. HCCSD also sent the public notices to over 500 interested parties via email blast which includes but not limited to individuals, county departments, local cities, non-profits, businesses, housing developers/providers, utility districts and healthcare organizations for distribution and information. Many of these interested parties are non-profits who advocate and serve persons in protected classes. In addition, when public meetings are held, CSD has access to an English/Spanish interpreter and all announcements of public meetings state that translation services will be provided when advanced notice of need is received. Should an interpreter be needed, in person, or on the telephone, the person is referred to a bilingual employee. A translation service is also available to accommodate other languages.

Other Efforts

In addition to a broad based citizen participation effort, HCCSD annually conducts extensive public outreach efforts in the Request for Proposal (RFP) Process that is used to determine the projects to be funded with CDBG, HOME and ESG funds. This action further ensures that the RFP process is a fair, open, and competitive process in which participation by organizations throughout the community is essential. The RFP process includes a number of opportunities for public interaction, including a proposal information workshop in which potential applicants are informed of the guidelines for the application and review process. The PY2015 Notice of Funding Availability was distributed to interested persons (maintained on a mailing list) on June 2nd. Public Notices for the PY2015 Request for Proposals (RFP) were issued on June 5th, 12th, and 19th and Applicant Conferences were held on June 11th and 12th. Public Notices were also issued on November 3rd and 16th to inform the public of the availability of the PY2015 AAP, the projects recommended for funding during the PY2015 period for public comment, and the Public Hearing being held on November 18th.

During the year, technical assistance is provided to sub-recipients, including instances where projects or programs are experiencing difficulties. When clients, sub-recipients, or HCCSD discovers problems such as program glitches and budget discrepancies, they are addressed and resolved in coordination with HCCSD. Additional questions are addressed from individuals and organizations wanting information, such as how to establish a non-profit organization or apply for federal grant funds. Technical Assistance for the PY2015 RFP was held with providers by appointment during the week of June 23rd – June 27th.

As part of the HCCSD's funding process, public areas in construction projects are being made accessible to persons with disabilities. HCCSD requires that within its *Affordable Housing Standards*

that all common areas and facilities, as well as mail areas and spaces be designed to be handicapped accessible with particular attention given to the needs of the elderly and other special needs individuals. HCCSD also requires that all eligible housing developments funded by the department be Section 504 compliant. Additionally, all contractual agreements between CSD and project sponsors contain language that ensures construction projects adhere to all federal, state, and local laws regarding accessibility of all newly constructed facilities to persons with disabilities. To ensure that these regulations are being followed, CSD has in place regular monitoring and compliance activities.

HCCSD also continued to support with local funds and maintain the Housing Community Resource Center (HCRC), which is a clearinghouse of housing related information and links in Harris County. The center's website has an interactive database of potential housing units, particularly for low- to moderate-income families. In PY2013, there were 7,116,474 visitors to the website. Many sought housing assistance and referrals. The center reaches out to all cultures and life situations including but not limited to the elderly, disabled, low-income families, and female-head of households. The resource center's staff also actively works with individuals, who believe they have been a victim of housing discrimination. The county also collaborates with other local Fair Housing agencies, such as the Greater Houston Fair Housing Center and HAUL on Fair Housing issues and education.

On January 15, 2013, HCCSD submitted its new Fair Housing Plan and Analysis of Impediments along with its PY2013-2017 Consolidated Plan to HUD. During the year preceding submission (PY2012), the county conducted a series of meetings, focus groups, interviews and public hearings throughout the county seeking input from citizens, advocate groups, homeless and public service providers, CDC's, CHDO's and other interested groups regarding housing issues and barriers to housing choice. Staff also solicited information about community resources and problems through a community survey and needs/data assessment. The findings from the consultation, survey and needs/data assessment assisted the county to develop the Fair Housing Plan and Analysis of Impediments and to develop goals for the Consolidated Plan.

Section 2: Accomplishments

PY2015

Projected Housing Accomplishments According to Race/Ethnicity

Housing by Race/Ethnicity	
Hispanic	25
Non-Hispanic	54
<i>White</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Black</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>Asian</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>American Indian or American Native</i>	<i>1</i>

<i>Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander</i>	<i>0</i>	
<i>Other</i>	<i>2</i>	
<i>Multi-race</i>	<i>1</i>	
Total		79

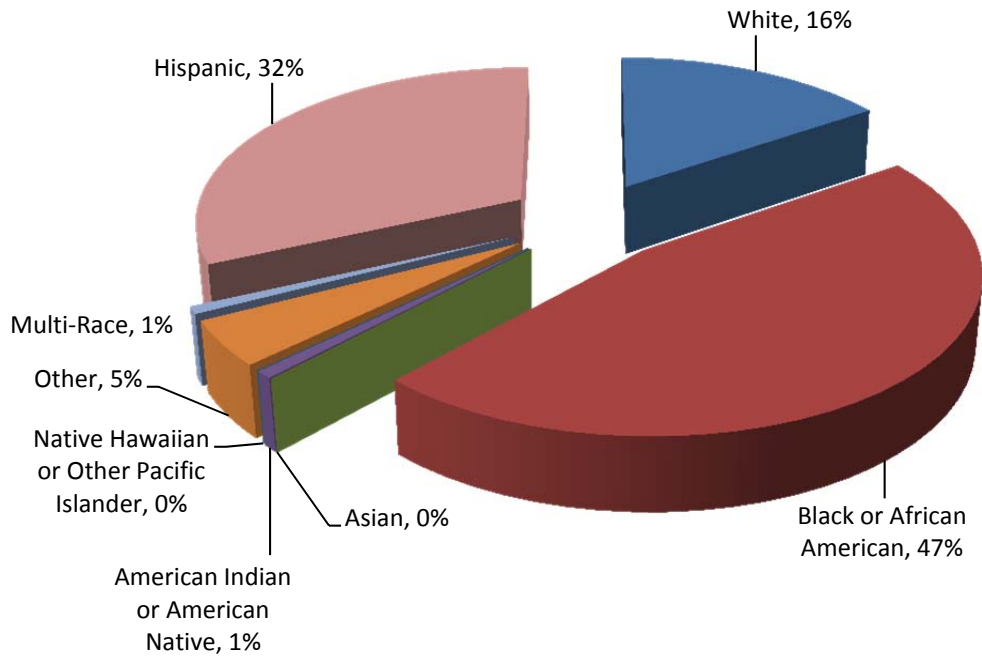
PY2013

HCCSD's grant programs furthers fair housing through the allocation of dollars to support the construction of affordable housing units, by assisting low-income homebuyers with downpayment costs, and through the rehabilitation of owner and renter-occupied low-income housing units. The support of such projects not only serves to encourage access to affordable housing, but also furthers fair housing by increasing housing options across the county's service area and improves low opportunity areas.

Affordable Housing

Furthering affordable housing encompasses one of the primary purposes of HUD and is therefore a major component in reporting and evaluating performance. This section summarizes Harris County's efforts to further affordable housing during PY2013. These achievements utilized CDBG and HOME funds to promote the availability of affordable housing and increase the amount of decent, safe housing stock. In PY2013, the county provided 129 households with new housing or housing repairs. The following tables and charts identify the number of persons by ethnicity.

Chart 1: PY2013 Affordable Housing Accomplishments: Persons Assisted According to Race/Ethnicity



According to Chart 1: Affordable Housing Accomplishments for Persons Assisted According to Race/Ethnicity, the PY2013 CAPER reports, of the people who were provided with direct homeownership, new construction of housing, housing rehabilitation or lead-based paint abatement., 47 percent were Black, 16 percent were White, 32 percent were Hispanic, 5 percent were Other and 1 percent were Multi-race.

Table 1: PY 2013 Housing Accomplishments According to Income

Priority Need Category	Units
Owners : (129 households)	
Extremely Low (0-30% MFI)	33
Very Low (31-50% MFI)	30
Low (51-80% MFI)	66
Renters: (0) households)	
Extremely Low (0-30% MFI)	0
Very Low (31-50% MFI)	0
Low (51-80% MFI)	0
Total	129

Note: MFI: Median Family Income based on a family of four

According to Table 1: PY 2013 Housing Accomplishments According to Income, of the 129 households that received housing assistance, all were owners. Of the 129 owners, 33 were extremely low income (0-30% MFI), 30 were very low income (31-50% MFI), 66 were low income (51-80% MFI).

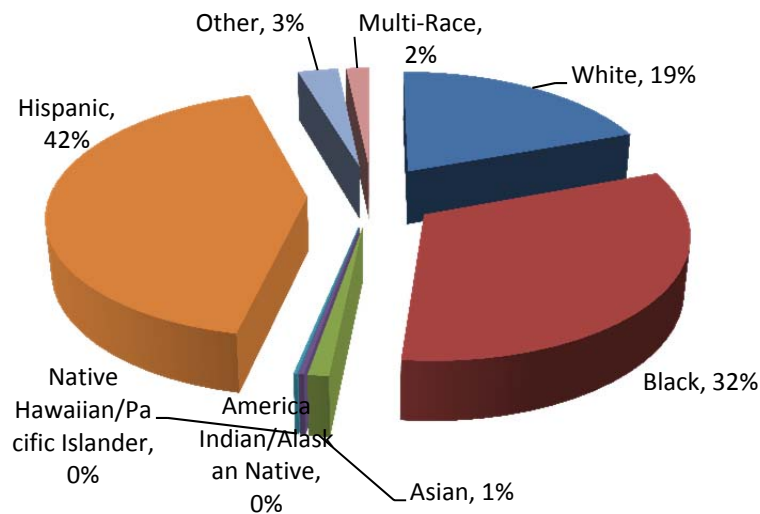
As part of the direct homeownership program funded by county HOME funds, the program educated homebuyers, lenders, real estate agents, and housing developers on Fair Housing issues. Through the policies of the program, the county sought to protect homebuyers from predatory lending practices. Homebuyers also received homebuyer counseling that included their rights under the law. Harris County also expended \$434,560.13 in PY2013 CDBG funding for minor home repair and lead abatement to serve low-income homeowners predominately in low-income, minority concentrated neighborhoods.

Public Services

This section of the statement is dedicated to summarizing program accomplishments in eight non-housing community development areas of eligible activities: public service, public facilities, infrastructure, crime awareness, special needs groups, workforce development, and area benefit projects. CDBG public service projects primarily benefited low-income limited clientele and seek to improve the quality of life of individuals and families. Special needs programs primarily benefited those persons, who are elderly, disabled, are infected with HIV/AIDS, and/or have a substance abuse problem.

Referenced in Chart 2: Public Services Activities Persons Served by Race/Ethnicity, out of the 3,042 total persons served through public services activities, 42 percent were Hispanic, 32 percent were Black, 19 percent were White, 3 percent were Other Race, 1 percent were Asian and 2 percent were Multi-Race.

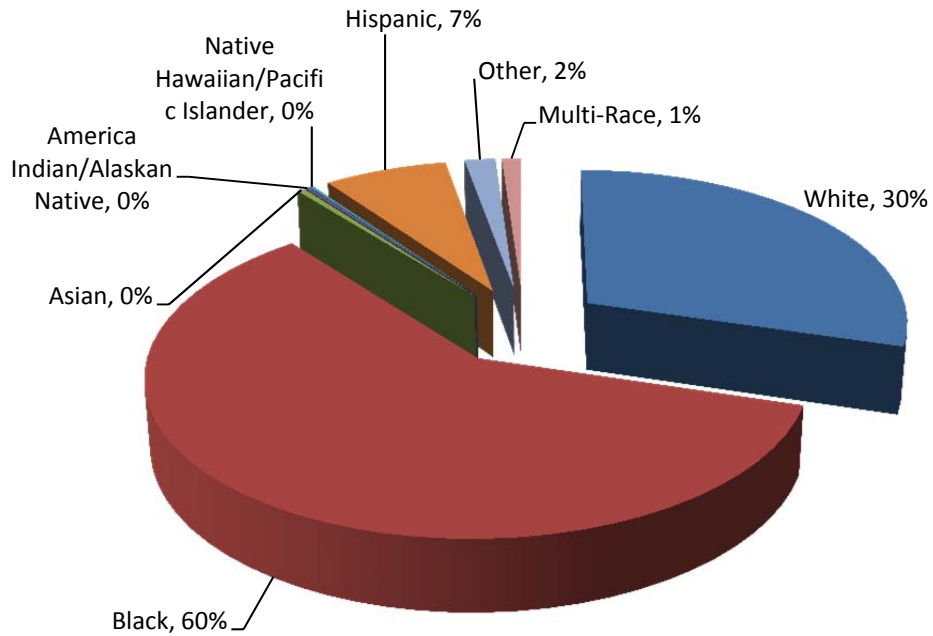
Chart 2: Public Services Activities Persons Served by Race/Ethnicity



Homelessness

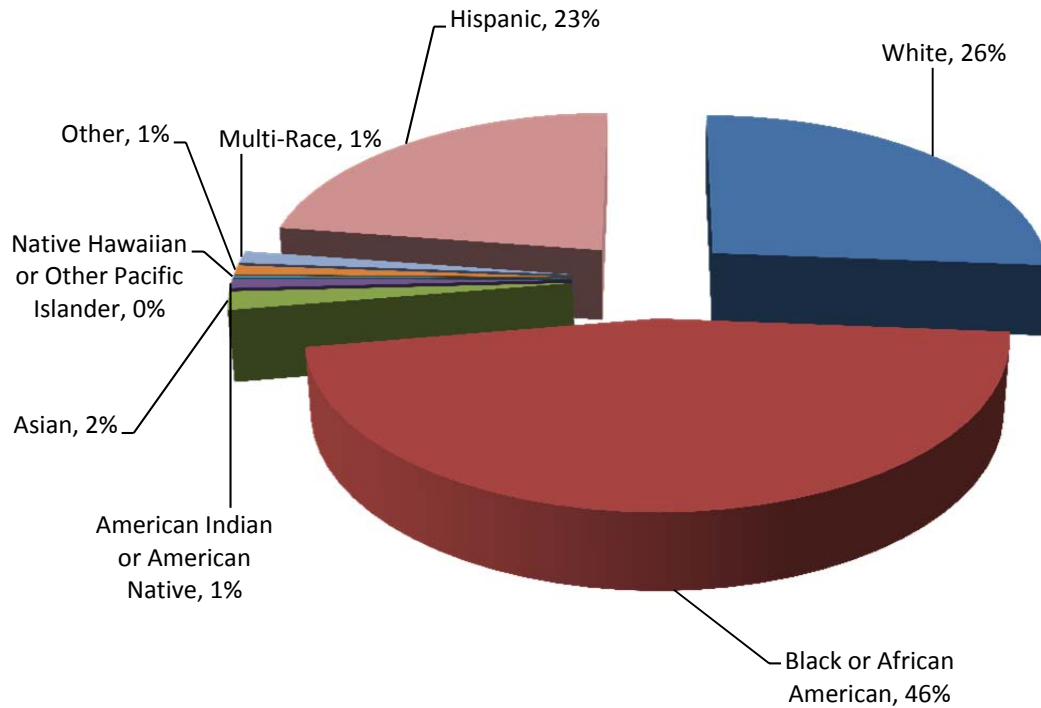
Under the Homeless category, the county expended CDBG and ESG funds and assisted 1,451 homeless persons with shelter and supportive services. Under the CDBG category, funds utilized in PY2013 served 456 homeless persons. As seen in Chart 3: Homeless Activities for Persons Served by Race/Ethnicity for persons that received homeless services, 60 percent were Black, 30 percent were White, 7 percent were Hispanic, 1 percent were Multi-Race, and 2 percent were Other Race.

Chart 3: CDBG Homeless Activities Persons Served by Race/Ethnicity



During PY2013, Harris County expended ESG dollars in assisting 995 homeless persons with shelter and supportive services. Of those homeless persons, 46 percent were Black, 26 percent were White, 23 percent were Hispanic, 2 percent were Asian, and 1 percent were Multi-Race or Other Race respectively (see Chart 4).

Chart 4: ESG Activities Persons Served by Race/Ethnicity



Public Facilities/Infrastructure

HCCSD sought to improve low- to moderate-income neighborhoods, particularly areas with high poverty and minority concentration that suffer inadequate infrastructure and facilities. This section of the statement is dedicated to summarizing program accomplishments. Projects included water and sewer improvements, street improvements, and installation of a new park in HCCSD target areas. These areas are established neighborhoods seeking to improve the conditions in their local community. In PY2013, there were a total of 35,946 persons served by public infrastructure projects and 14,933 persons were served by public facility projects.

Section 3 Activities

Section 3 of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968 contains provisions to ensure that employment and other economic opportunities generated by certain HUD financial assistance shall, to the greatest extent feasible, be directed to low- to very low-income persons, particularly those who are recipients of government assistance for housing, and to business concerns that provide economic opportunities to these populations. HCCSD participates in Section 3 and promotes and encourages contractors to hire Section 3 residents and Section 3 businesses through pre-bid and pre-construction meetings. For more information, see Appendix H for Section 3 Report

To fulfill the responsibility of the Section 3 Plan, Harris County has appointed a Section 3 Coordinator to provide implementation and compliance monitoring of all Section 3 activities for

CDBG Disaster Recovery Program funded projects. Additionally, an Advisory Board has been assembled to provide assistance in the development of the Section 3 program. In late PY2013, HCCSD developed partnerships with local employment organizations serving low- to moderate-income populations, local housing authorities, and local non-profits that provide housing and/or support services to low-income and homeless persons.

Local Fair Housing Enforcement Contacts

If you feel you have experienced discrimination in the purchase or rental of your home, report it to one of these agencies.

Attorney General of Texas

(800) 252-8011

City of Houston, Dept. of Housing & Community Development

(713) 868-8400

Greater Houston Fair Housing Center

(713) 641-3247

Houston Apartment Association

(281) 933-2224

Houston Area Urban League Fair Housing Program

(713) 393-8735

Houston Center for Independent Living

(713) 974-4621

HUD Fair Housing Complaint

888-560-8913 or 817-978-5900

HUD Equal Housing Opportunity

1-800-669-9777 – Hearing Impaired, please call TTY (800) 927-9275

Houston Office

State Bar of Texas

(800) 204-2222 x2610

Tenants Council of Houston

(713) 982-1985

Texas Workforce - Civil Rights Division

(888) 452-4778